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CIA Contends Mao Never Made Swim

Mao Tse-tung's world-publicized nine-mile swim in the Yangtze River was pure and simple a piece of Oriental trickery.

The fanfared stunt was either a complete phony or was made by Mao's double.

Those are the conclusions of the Central Intelligence Agency on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the physical condition of the Chinese Communist ruler.

Based on information from a wide range of sources — British and other foreign diplomats, Chinese defectors, recent African visitors in Peiping — the CIA study stresses the following points:

No Western diplomats, newsmen, or any others were permitted to witness Mao's extraordinary swimming feat.

Few Specifics

Accounts and photographs as released by the official New China News Agency, gave no indication of the time and place of Mao's swim. The sole explicit detail was that it was in the Yangtze River.

Definite information is known about Mao's illnesses in the past several years to support a medical conclusion that he is too ill to swim the claimed nine miles, to say nothing about his alleged record speed.

Citing an interview by a former member of Mao's bodyguard who defected earlier this

out that his physical activities have been severely restricted since he suffered a second series of strokes in July, 1965.

Serious Ailments

Mao's first stroke occurred in 1958. That resulted in his going into semi-retirement, with few public appearances and little traveling throughout China. In addition to this major physical handicap, Mao is portrayed in the CIA study as suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease and high blood pressure.

A foreign visitor, who was able to get a close-up look at the Chinese Red leader in the past four months, described him as thin, drawn, and lacking in vitality.

In direct contrast Mao appeared plump and vigorous in the official swimming photographs.

The Pretender

The CIA's belief in the existence of a stand-in for Mao is based largely on information from his former bodyguard, who served in that role for nearly five years.

Mao's double, as described by the defector in a Hong Kong interview, is a professor at Peiping Normal University. He was recruited in 1965 to make occasional public appearances after the Communist ruler was bedridden by strokes.

The CIA report quotes that defected bodyguard as stating Mao got the idea of resorting to a double from the Allies' stratagem of doing that with General Montgomery in World War II.

To mislead the Germans about the time and place of D-Day, a Lieutenant E. Clifton James, a dead ringer for Montgomery, impersonated him in public. Shortly before the invasion, the double was sent to North Africa with a big send-off from high-ranking officials and a large welcome when he arrived.

When the Germans learned of Montgomery's presence in North Africa, they hastily moved troops to southern Europe.

No Ordinary Swim

The reason Peiping "staged" the Mao swimming spectacular is still as much a mystery as the circumstances surrounding it.

One authority, who participated in preparing the CIA study, suggested in an accompanying memorandum that the stunt was a propaganda build-up to Mao's image as a

world and the Chinese masses. Another expert speculates that the affair was "arranged" to demonstrate that Mao's health is not a problem and that his leadership is not being affected by the purges sweeping the Communist regime.

Other details of Mao's life cited in the CIA analysis are:

He and a number of Red leaders live in a secluded enclave 25 miles northeast of Peiping called "New Peiping." The community is so secret that most Chinese have never heard of it. Only the most senior and trusted officials and a few hundred carefully screened security personnel know about the place.

"New Peiping," also called the "Forbidden City," covers about eight square miles and is surrounded by a 60-foot-thick belt of trees to screen it from travelers on the nearby Techning highway. The area is heavily guarded with pillboxes, anti-aircraft guns, and missiles and a 15-foot moat.

Five-Room Residence

Mao lives and works, when his doctors permit, in a sprawling H-shaped building of red and gray brick. His five-room living quarters, which occupy one side of the structure, consist of a dining room, large reception area, study, and two bedrooms, one for Mao and the other for his wife.

The Communist ruler's offices are on the other side of the building. They are staffed by four secretaries and include a communication center, living quarters for Mao's double, and a large private office for Mao.

Mao's fourth wife, Chiang Ching, former film actress, runs the movie section of the propaganda department. Presumably she was in charge of the film taken of the big swim. Mao's two daughters, who live and work elsewhere, are occasional visitors at the "Forbidden City."

Security measures at Mao's headquarters are so stringent that high officials are sometimes kept waiting days before being admitted.

Two bodyguards and a physician are always at Mao's side. (Distributed 1966 by The Hall Syndicate, Inc. All Rights Reserved)

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